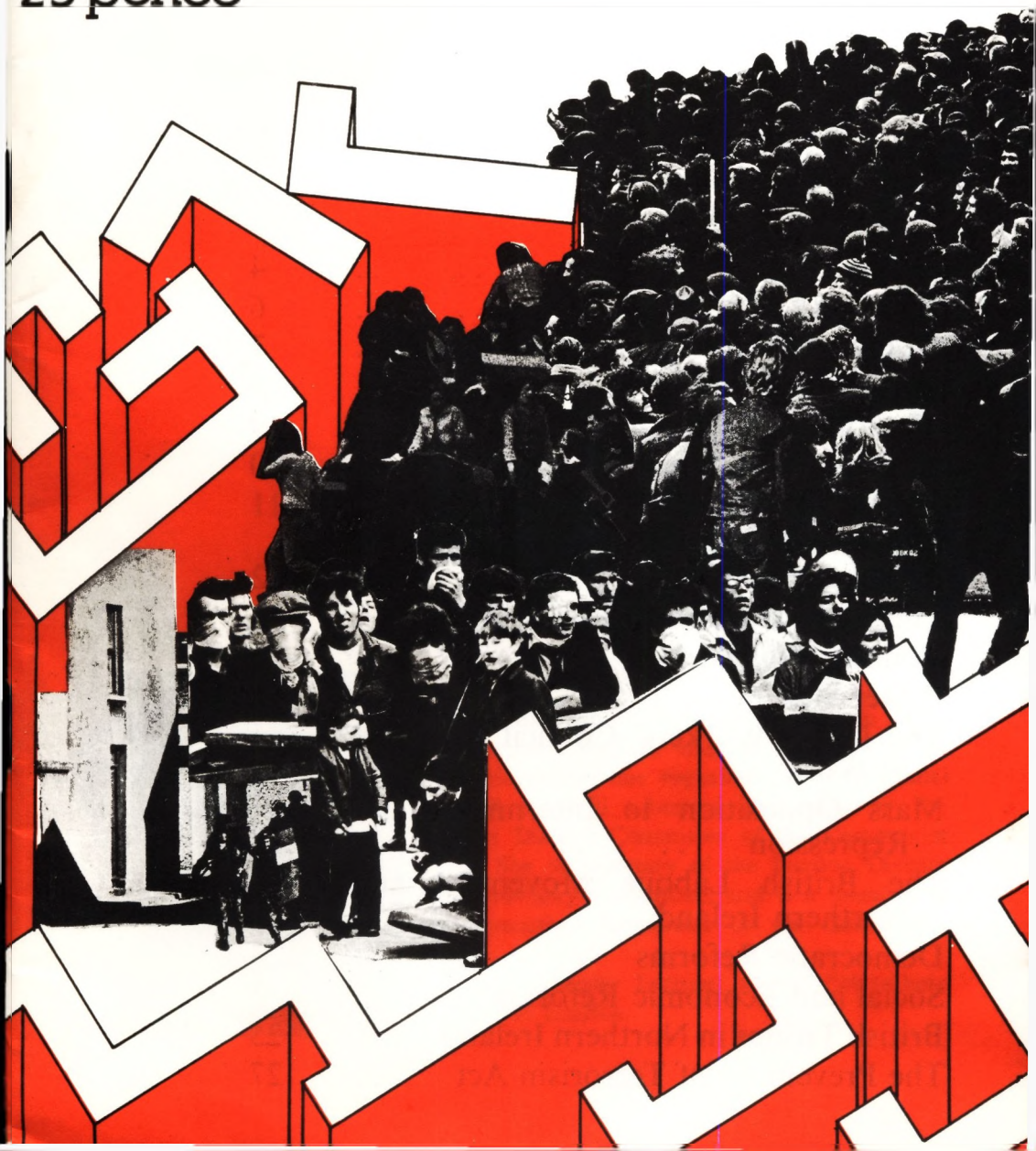
NORTHERN IRELAND

a programme for action

Irene Brennan

Communist Party pamphlet

25 pence



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SBN 90030 258 5

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Introduction

The time is long past to end, once and for all, British imperialism in Ireland. For centuries the Irish people have been struggling for their freedom. Fifty years ago they did achieve political independence—but only for 26 out of the 32 counties of Ireland. The rest were torn away and joined to Britain to form the so-called United Kingdom.

The present sufferings of the people of the six counties (Northern Ireland) are a direct result of the policies adopted by successive British governments. Since the creation of this artificial statelet against the wishes of the vast majority of the Irish people, those in Northern Ireland who oppose union with Britain have been the target for unremitting oppression and systematic discrimination.

During the last five years, both Labour and Tory governments have been pursuing repressive, reactionary, so-called "bi-partisan" policies in Northern Ireland. It is clear that they have dramatically failed to provide a basis for the ending of violence and have prevented any progress towards unity, peace and democracy. If the Labour government continues to operate these Tory policies there is a very grave danger that there will be a conflagration of sectarian violence that will engulf the whole of Northern Ireland in civil conflict, inflicting untold misery, suffering, and even death, on thousands of innocent people. At best, the sickening round of sectarian violence, senseless bombings and military harassment will continue.

In 1969, the demands of the Civil Rights movement for civil and political rights for all sections of the population were met with organised brutality and violence; pogroms were launched against anti-unionist communities; peaceful demonstrators were attacked by armed thugs often operating in league with the Royal Ulster Constabulary. Since then the level of violence has escalated enormously. Already, at the time of writing the number is around 1,400 killed, while thousands more have been injured and tens of thousands intimidated from their homes (one in nine of the entire population). During the first nine months of 1975 there has been a horrifying escalation of sectarian assassinations—the majority of anti-unionists. The British army has done hardly anything to stop this appalling slaughter; on the contrary, it still harasses anti-unionist areas. In a blind response to the provocation, the Provisionals, in spite of their cease fire, have admitted to a number of bombings during the last month—these senseless acts can do nothing but make the situation even more desperate.

Following the introduction of internment in 1971, well over 2,000 people have been subjected to internment without trial and some of these have suffered atrocious tortures. The British army has been used to harass anti-unionist areas, vandalising homes with punitive arms searches; maintaining a constantly provocative military presence on the streets; screening and detaining tens of thousands of people.

The policies of the British government have cost the Irish dear, but they have also placed a heavy burden on the British people. Of the hundreds of millions of pounds coming from central government at Westminster, vast amounts are used on security operations, while little is done to overcome the enormous economic and social problems caused by 50 years of hard-faced, reactionary mismanagement of Northern Ireland's economy, where the levels of unemployment are much higher than anywhere else in the United Kingdom and where the standard of living is significantly lower. The economic policies of the present British government have hit the working people in Northern Ireland in the same way as they have affected the British people; in Northern Ireland the unemployment figure is now 10.6 per cent. This makes it much more difficult to combat discrimination in employment. The cut-back in public expenditure, especially in housing, means that it is impossible, at the moment, to remedy the appalling situation where 19.7 per cent of the housing is unfit for human habitation. Urgent talks are required between the Irish and British TUC about the present economic crisis and the combating of sectarianism, in the spirit of the 1975 TUC resolution on Northern Ireland.

Political problems require political solutions—not military repression. The British government faces a crucial choice—either to continue its present disastrous course, or to break finally with the policies of imperialism and to search for a solution that will ensure Britain's withdrawal from Ireland. While it is true that the way forward in Northern Ireland can only be taken by the Irish people themselves, nevertheless there must be a decisive change in British government policy if the obstacles to Irish self-determination are to be overcome.

The present Convention was introduced by the British authorities as though of itself it offered a real opportunity to the people of Northern Ireland to solve their problems. However, in a situation where there has been no attempt to introduce and safeguard democratic and political rights for all sections of the population, it is very difficult to see how the Convention could serve any useful purpose. It is dominated by the right wing parties of the United Ulster Unionist Council (UUUC) who are refusing to support any system of power sharing. The recent splits between Craig and the majority of the UUUC about his proposal that there should be an emergency "coalition" between the UUUC and the SDLP (Social and Democratic Labour Party) are differences about tactics and not about any question of substance. All of them are committed to the continuance of sectarian rule and loyalist repression. However, Craig believes that by this manoeuvre of an emergency coalition he can split the anti-unionists and consolidate the loyalist position. As it happens, it would also get the British government off the hook, as it is committed to power sharing but has found it rejected by the Convention.

What is needed is a completely new policy: the present evils in Northern Ireland arise from a situation where sectarianism and

discrimination have been supported by repression and by the ideology of unionism and the Protestant ascendancy. That situation can and must be changed by the introduction and implementation of democratic reforms embodied in a Bill of Rights, and by social and economic changes that will provide the basis for peace and progress in Northern Ireland.

The crux of the matter is that real progress for Northern Ireland will lead towards the direction of full Irish self-determination. But that cannot be achieved without building unity between sections of people in the North and the South. An essential condition of this is the introduction of full democracy in the North. So we call for the end of all repressive legislation—and in particular the **immediate** ending of internment, the passing of a Bill of Rights ensuring full democratic, civil and political rights for all sections of the Northern Ireland people.

The British army is, at the moment, the major instrument of repression. It enables internment to be maintained and is used to constantly harass anti-unionist areas. Northern Ireland is being used by the army as a training ground in so-called counter-insurgency; the techniques learnt there might well be used against the people of Britain, according to military strategists such as Kitson. Moreover, the army has shown very disturbing signs of a desire to act with political independence in the situation, and while it terrorises the anti-unionist population does very little indeed to control the loyalist paramilitary groups. Therefore we demand the immediate removal of the troops from the streets and their withdrawal to barracks, pending their final and complete withdrawal.

Partition

One cannot understand the present crisis in all its complexity without a knowledge of how the artificial statelet of Northern Ireland first came into being.

The history of Northern Ireland has always been one of repression and social injustice. For it was born out of an unholy alliance between British imperialism, seeking to maintain its control over a weak and divided Ireland, and the ruling class in the North of Ireland, clinging to its power and privilege and utterly opposed to Irish self-determination. In order to appease these interests and as the price of political independence for the rest of the country, six counties were severed from Ireland and put under a reactionary government at Stormont, which called itself "loyalist", ie loyal to the interests of British imperialism and to those of the landowners and employers of Northern Ireland itself.

Northern Ireland's borders were specifically designed to ensure maximum support, loyalist support, within the artificially created statelet. Unlike the rest of Ireland, the six counties

comprising Northern Ireland had a large number of inhabitants who were descendants of settlers from Scotland and the North of England. These settlers of the "plantation", as it was called, had been given the most fertile farming land in the North of Ireland, after driving out the original Irish farmers. This settlement had occurred during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries when England was consolidating her power in Ireland after the atrocities of the Cromwellian campaign.

The settlers were dominated by loyalist ideas about the importance of the union with Britain, and, as often happens, were full of fear and hatred of the Irish people they had dispossessed and of contempt for Irish culture. In the nineteenth century many of their descendants were still gripped by the same ideology and the accompanying religious bigotry. This enabled the Tories at Westminster to play what became known as the "orange card" in order to prevent Irish home rule. By this was meant the organised political (and in some cases, military) strength of the Orange Lodges, as they were called, where the ideas of unionism and Protestant supremacy were peddled to the masses of Protestants in Ireland, especially in Northern Ireland. Together these Lodges formed the Orange Order, which discouraged all forms of class unity among the workers and small farmers and instead promoted the vilest, most reactionary sectarianism and discrimination as a way of building support for the Union with Britain. It helped to form the loyalist paramilitary groups that mushroomed during the turn of the century, and was one of the important factors that helped to decide the partition of Ireland.

Discrimination

However, unionism did not go unchallenged. It was defied by the nationalists, of course, but also by the emerging labour movement which was growing up in the industrial centres—notably Belfast.

From the beginning unionism in Northern Ireland has seen that a strong and unified labour movement would be one of its main enemies and has therefore done all it can to weaken and divide the working class movement. Unfortunately it has had a large measure of success. Discrimination has been one of its most powerful weapons and it has been used skilfully to set Protestant and Catholic workers against one another.

This has not only prevented moves towards self-determination: it has also weakened the struggle of the workers against the employers.

Discrimination has been easier to exercise because of the worsening economic situation. The traditional industries, such as shipbuilding, flax and engineering, have all declined. The figures for

the last 20 years are very dramatic: in shipbuilding the number employed fell from 24,000 to 10,000 between 1950 and 1973. A Raftery in a pamphlet *The Exploited Island* explains why:

> "Industry in the North is founded on the basis of processing raw materials which are bought almost exclusively from abroad.
>
> "There has been virtually no development of the natural resources of the area. . . . In spite of the fact that the North is supposed to be part of the British economy, in fact it must balance its trade with Britain as if it were a foreign country. . . . This creates a balance of payments problem. It is solved by creating unemployment."

That unemployment falls most heavily on Catholics. A few figures will clarify the point:

Protestant Areas	%	**Catholic Areas**	%
Antrim	3	Strabane	24.9
Ballynahinch ..	2.6	Newry	20
Lisburn	2.6	Bogside (Derry) ..	35
Larne	3	Creggan	35

January 13, 1975, unemployment figures for male unemployment published by the Department of Manpower. The rate given in that report for Derry is 15 per cent. The figures above for Bogside (Derry) and Creggan have been assessed by community group studies, analysing different areas in the same town.

It is very difficult for Catholics to receive training and therefore they are mostly confined to unskilled and casual work. Many sections of the skilled workforce, such as the power workers, have no Catholics to speak of in their ranks.

Therefore Catholic workers have been driven into emigration. In 1974 the figure for Northern Ireland was 12,000, many of whom were Catholics, as can be seen from the fact that, although the school population is 52 per cent Catholic, only 34 per cent of the population over 21 are Catholic. This anomaly has existed for years; nothing shows more clearly the way in which young Catholic workers are forced to emigrate as they join the ranks of the unemployed.

The Price of Disunity

However, the Protestant workers who have been befuddled by loyalist ideology and have, to a large extent, acquiesced in these discriminatory practices, have paid a heavy price. The average income per head of population is only 65 per cent of that in Britain. To make the position clearer we might look at the figures for household income and per capita for the South East of England and Northern Ireland respectively.

	Household	Individual
South East England	£56.54	£20.69
Northern Ireland	£38.08	£11.47

Taken from the Northern Ireland Committee of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions Statement, April 1975.

Although Catholics are discriminated against in the allocation of housing, nevertheless in both sections of the working people many live in appalling conditions. In contrast to the rate for Britain (7.3 per cent), in Northern Ireland 19.7 per cent of the housing stock is unfit for human habitation, while in Fermanagh, a rural area, the figure rises to 40 per cent. 15 per cent of all houses are unconnected to a public sewer, while 60 per cent of the houses in Belfast are in need of immediate serious repair. (Northern Ireland Housing Executive Report, 1974.) In these conditions it is not surprising that the infant mortality rate is significantly higher than that for Britain.

Women in Northern Ireland suffer a heavy burden of oppression as women. Divorce is more difficult and they do not have the same property rights as women in Britain. Contraceptive aids are unavailable in certain areas and abortion frowned upon by many doctors, both Catholic and Protestant. It is estimated that at least 1,000 women are forced to travel to Britain every year in order to obtain an abortion. There are less nurseries in the whole of Northern Ireland than in the city of Bristol, while the rates of pay for women workers (many of them the sole family breadwinners) are appalling. For example, women in shirt-making are earning between £13 and £16 per week.

Methods of Repression

The unionists have not relied simply on the age-old tactics of divide and rule to maintain their grip on the people of Northern Ireland: they also had at their disposal the apparatus of a police state.

The Special Powers Act was passed in 1922 by the British Parliament. In the name of the British people, Parliament allowed the unionist régime in Northern Ireland to:

- Arrest without warrant
- Intern a person without charge or trial
- Permit punishment by flogging
- Enter premises without a warrant
- Prevent legal advisors from gaining access to accused persons, along with a number of other practices which subvert the ordinary course of justice.

Many of these repressive measures were in contravention of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and of the European Convention, to which the British government is a signatory.

And this Act was no empty symbol of unionist intransigence; time and again it was used to terrorise the anti-unionist population, and to prevent the development of progressive political movements.

As well as police powers, the Stormont régime also had at its disposal a paramilitary force—the B-Specials. This bunch of legalised thugs was formed in 1921 from the various bands of armed blacklegs and bully boys who had been used against the workers of Belfast as well as the anti-unionists in the country areas. Although they were formally disbanded in 1969, only some of their guns were handed in to the authorities, and they are the backbone of the loyalist paramilitary groups that have been operating such an atrocious assassination campaign against Catholics. It is estimated that there are 300,000 guns in Northern Ireland, most of them in loyalist hands.

Unionism and Monopoly Capitalism

The policies of unionism during the last 50 years have, in fact, been responsible for the decline in the Northern Ireland economy. This decline has been very much more marked in the last 20 years in comparison with Britain and the rest of Ireland.

The interests of the unionists and those of monopoly capitalism are now no longer identical. The latter wishes to dispense with the border in order to lay the whole of Ireland open to economic exploitation on a more massive scale.

Therefore in the sixties certain consultations took place between the Irish government and the then leader of the Unionist Party, Terence O'Neill, in order to establish greater ease of operation to big business and facilitate the entry of Ireland into the Common Market. Only 22 per cent of industry in Northern Ireland is locally based, while in the South of Ireland British firms own 45 per cent of enterprises. The Irish bourgeoisie themselves have willingly co-operated in the plundering of their country.

As Connolly, patriot, socialist and Marxist, put it: "They have . . . a thousand economic strings in the shape of investments binding them to British capitalism as against every sentimental and historic attachment drawing them towards Irish patriotism: only the Irish working class are the incorruptible inheritors of the fight for freedom in Ireland."

However, the small business men and farmers that formed the basis of support for unionism recognised a threat to their own class interests and to the traditional Protestant ascendancy. They brought down O'Neill. Grave splits took place in the ranks of

the unionists; the party now led by Faulkner represents to a large extent the interests of big business. It is known as the Unionist Party of Northern Ireland. The Democratic Unionist Party, led by Paisley; the official Unionist Party led by West; and the Vanguard Unionist Party led by Craig, constitute the political parties of the United Ulster Unionist Council (UUUC). It continues the defence of the Protestant ascendancy and, in a reactionary way, the class position of small business men and farmers.

The old alliance between big business and large landowners on the one hand, and small business men and farmers on the other, which was created by the old Unionist Party, has now largely disappeared. Unfortunately the rank-and-file supporters of the unionist parties have not yet discovered that their real interests are not the same as those of their leaders who act in such an intransigent and reactionary fashion.

The Civil Rights Movement

The struggle for Irish self-determination and against the brutality, repression and exploitation of the unionist régime was never crushed, in spite of the ferocious measures taken against any kind of organised opposition.

After partition, the Republican movement in the North resisted the monolithic power of unionism. It ran a series of military campaigns, but was gradually losing support among the anti-unionist population by the end of the fifties. However, in the early sixties it adopted a decisive shift in strategy.

The progressive sections of the labour movement had taken up a demand, made first by the Belfast Trades Council, for Civil Rights in Northern Ireland. The Republican movement decided to throw its weight behind this demand.

And so the civil rights movement was born, out of an alliance between the progressive sections of the labour movement and the nationalist movement. For, as James Connolly once put it: "The security of the working class of Ireland has the same roots as the security of the people of Ireland as a whole. The roots are in Ireland and can only grow and function properly in an atmosphere of national freedom."

There are those who argue, from positions of crude and naïve nationalism or ultra-leftism, that the struggle for democratic rights is of no importance to the fight for Irish self-determination. They couldn't be more mistaken.

The civil rights movement struck a heavy blow at the very foundation of repression in the North of Ireland; it challenged the sectarian discrimination that had divided and weakened the working class and undermined the loyalist ideology that had justified this oppression.

As well as calling for an end to the policies that had produced mass unemployment and bad housing and which bolstered blatant discrimination, it also demanded the repeal of the Special Powers Act, the disbanding of the B-Specials, and the freedom for Republicans to propagate their policies for a united Ireland in a peaceful and political fashion. But this in turn required the ending of a notoriously widespread gerrymandering and the introduction of proportional representation in elections. The programme of the civil rights movement laid the basis for the development of non-sectarian politics in Northern Ireland and in doing so began to establish mass support, especially in the anti-unionist areas.

It is sometimes argued by loyalist politicians that the civil rights movement developed as a **sectarian** anti-unionist organisation, but this slander is refuted by the fact that progressives among the protestant people also supported its programme. Indeed, the demand for civil rights for all sections of the people came initially from the Belfast Trades Council and was taken up, not only by the Republican movement, but by the Northern Ireland Committee of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions and by the students of Queen's University, Belfast.

Nevertheless it remains true that the majority of those who gave the civil rights movement initial support came from anti-unionist areas—which is only what might be expected given that they had suffered most under unionism. Also the stranglehold of loyalist prejudice and sectarianism was very strong among the Protestant workers stifling mass support from them for the democratic struggle.

However, the **potential** support for the programme from wide sections of the community posed a grave threat to the unionist régime at Stormont, so it moved against the civil rights demonstrators, using the arsenal of repression that it had at its disposal. Peaceful marchers were met with baton charges from the RUC, and they were brutally attacked by loyalist thugs, many of them in the B-Specials (the paramilitary special police force), acting in league with the RUC. Pogroms were launched against anti-unionist areas.

The Importance of the Struggle for Democracy

The way forward in Northern Ireland depends upon the building of unity between different sections of the working people and this can only be done when democratic reforms have made it

possible for the movement to overcome sectarian divisions. As Raftery put it in *The Exploited Island*:

> "Those who want independence and progress for Ireland must reach out their hands to the Protestant section of the working class, show them their fears of hostility and insecurity are understood, show that **democracy for all in the six counties would be for their benefit** as well as the Catholics." (My emphasis—I B.)

There are those who reject the democratic struggle as being just a tinkering with the present set-up. They betray in all their arguments a defeatist attitude towards the possibility of building unity between Protestant and Catholic workers. At times they talk as though the Protestant workers, who are still massively dominated by loyalist ideas, could be made through physical force to join a united Ireland. But the hard fact remains that a united Irish Republic is not possible in the face of massive opposition from the Protestants of Northern Ireland. They must be won to see that their interests are opposed to those of monopoly capitalism and British imperialism. If the movement for democracy can undermine sectarianism, then workers would be freer to unite on **class** issues. A developed class struggle in Northern Ireland would of necessity be anti-imperialist, because capitalism in Northern Ireland has always been identified with British exploitation.

It must be emphasised that the movement for democracy is **not** simply a reformist tinkering which accepts without question the present repressive system in Northern Ireland. On the contrary, democratic reforms cannot be implemented unless the system of government is transformed beyond all recognition. The loyalist leaders understand this well enough. That is why they were very quick to realise the nature of the threat they faced; **they** didn't see it as simply a request for a few democratic reforms that could be met without undermining the very fabric of the statelet. They knew better than that! That is why they met peaceful civil rights marches and demonstrations with such ruthless brutality.

The Republican movement during the sixties came to support the civil rights campaign precisely because it recognised the anti-imperialist character of the movement and the way in which the struggle for democracy was linked to the struggle for national liberation. It knew that the civil rights movement would challenge the very foundations of the reactionary unionist administration and that the desired end of national freedom and self-determination for the Irish people demanded the building of unity through a broad, democratic struggle against the forces of imperialism and local reaction. Significantly enough, following the decision of the Republican movement to support the civil rights movement, the former began to develop a much broader base of support, while it became much more socialist in its outlook.

The Intensification of Repression

The campaign of terrorism against the civil rights movement reached its climax in August 1969, when anti-unionist areas were attacked in many parts of the six counties, but especially in Derry and Belfast. In Belfast alone more than 500 homes were burned down and families made homeless. Callaghan, then Labour government minister responsible for security in Northern Ireland, sent troop reinforcements to police "trouble spots".

The British army had, of course, been present in Northern Ireland for centuries while Ireland was a British colony and it was the major instrument of British colonial power. After partition, the armed forces continued to be stationed in Northern Ireland. In 1969, after the vicious attacks on Catholic areas, they were substantially reinforced. At the time, the British and Irish Communist Parties issued a joint statement calling for an immediate implementation of democratic reforms and pointing out that the sending of troops would solve nothing. Political problems demanded a political solution.

In 1970, a fortnight after the Tories took office at Westminster, there was a shift in policy with regard to the armed forces in Northern Ireland. The right wing Labour leaders, by that time in opposition, accepted the change without challenge. Since then the troops have been used as a major instrument of repressive policies, directed mainly, but not exclusively, against anti-unionist working class areas. There has been substantial harassment of civilians through house searches (conducted with much wanton violence), arbitrary arrests, brutal beatings and, at times, indiscriminate shooting of unarmed persons, of which the massacre at Derry of 14 people during a civil rights march in January 1972 was the most atrocious example.

Internment had been used regularly by the unionist régime to stifle any form of republican activity. Ever since the formation of the artificial statelet no decade has passed without republicans being interned. In 1971, with the backing of the Tory government in Britain, Faulkner again resorted to this monstrous practice. This signalled a commitment to outright and unremitting repression in the face of the challenge from the civil rights movement.

To its deep shame, the Labour Party acquiesced in this attempt to shackle and then break the progressive movement in Northern Ireland. Four years later, and with a Labour government in power, there are still well over 200 internees and the government is still committed to the so-called "bi-partisan" policies of repression and shows very little sign of abandoning this reactionary position.

The introduction of internment was accompanied by the application of "depth interrogation" on selected prisoners. These were

by no means all Republicans: some were trade unionists, others belonged to the civil rights movement or were members of left wing groups. This so-called interrogation was, in fact, simply an ingenious and sophisticated form of torture. In a pamphlet produced by the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (NICRA) called *British Government Violation of Human Rights in Northern Ireland*, the following bestial practices are listed:

- Injections with hallucinogenic drugs
- Electric shock treatment by use of machine
- Burning with matches and candle
- Deprivation of sleep
- Psychological torture
- Being subjected to high-pitched noise, and hooding
- Placing a man in "search position", single finger of each hand to the wall, legs well apart, on toes, knees bent for prolonged periods
- Beating with batons on the kidneys and on the privates in the "search position"
- Rabbit punching to the back of the head while in the "search position".

All of these practices constitute violations of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the British government has been forced to pay large sums in compensation to those who suffered them.

Effects of Internment

The introduction of internment heralded a massive increase in military harassment of the civilian population and an undermining of all forms of peaceful political activity. As the recent Gardiner Report admitted, internment led to a sharp escalation of violence in the community and ensured much more public support to those engaged in violent forms of attack upon the state.

As for families of internees, they have come under abominable pressure; subject to severe economic hardship, they also suffer from psychological disorientation and stress caused by violent disruption of personal relations and family life, as well as anxiety about those interned.

Out of the miserable supplementary benefits, food and clothing has to be provided for the internees, leaving wives and children very often in conditions of extreme deprivation. It is necessary to supply food parcels to internees because the food they receive is, more often than not, nothing more than a cold mush and clothing is not provided by the prison authorities.

Internees do not receive credit for first-class insurance stamps while they are interned, so that they and their families are not able to claim ordinary benefits but are forced to rely on supplementary benefits, even after the internee has been released.

15 According to a report issued by a joint delegation to Northern

Ireland, organised under the auspices of the NCCL, the effect upon the children of internees is deplorable. They say:

> "We cannot overestimate the legacy of hatred and psychological disorientation that is being produced in the children of those in prison."

Any child over the age of 10 can be held in prison with adult prisoners.

In 1973 the government introduced the Diplock courts. These dispense with trial by jury and many of the safeguards of an accused person. These travesties of legal justice are another attack upon civil liberties in Northern Ireland, and are a radical departure from the ordinary protections which form part of the common law in Britain.

We have to remember, however, that these monstrous practices are being perpetrated by the British government in the name of the British people.

Counter Violence

Many groups in Northern Ireland have resorted to violence in the general climate of repression and brutality which was created by the attempt to smash the civil rights movement. However, the question of violence is not one we can consider in the abstract, nor are all acts of violence of the same character.

If the Irish people are to achieve self-determination, they will have to exert power of some kind in order to challenge and then overthrow the forces of British imperialism. But that power may be expressed in many different forms; not all of them violent and only in certain circumstances is it necessary or desirable to resort to armed force.

It is undoubtedly true that the British government, together with the former Stormont administration, was responsible for initiating and provoking violence against the progressive movement, both through military harassment and the tacit encouragement given to loyalist bully gangs.

In the last period, the number of sectarian assassinations of Catholics has been growing, under the blind eye of the military authorities.

All this has provoked a violent response from sections of the anti-unionists.

As we have seen above, the Republican movement supported the civil rights movement during the sixties and began to operate as a political organisation rather than a guerrilla army, as it had done previously. At the same time, it turned towards the left and developed a socialist theory of how the national liberation

of Ireland might be achieved. However, this policy development was resented by certain elements within the Republican movement, whose position was a simple nationalist one and who had not accepted any of the analysis of the link between British imperialism and Irish capitalism, both North and South, which the Republican leadership had made. They also feared socialist ideas, fearing that they were an attack on the basic tenets of Roman Catholicism.

After the loyalist attacks on the anti-unionist areas in 1969, this group began to criticise the leadership of the Republican movement and to call for a return to the traditional nationalist, but sectarian, armed struggle. By 1970 they had broken away and formed the Provisional IRA. Those who remained were known as the Official Republicans.

The Provisionals received a fair measure of support initially from the Catholics who had been badly frightened by the pogroms of 1969. The intensification of acts of repression by the authorities and the provocations and insults meted out by the troops only added fuel to the fire of armed revolt. Also, the Provisionals received support from business interests on the other side of the border who had been afraid of the left developments in the Republican movement and were only too eager to foster splits within the movement. There was a return to the strategy of armed struggle and guerrilla warfare abandoned in the sixties—but with a difference—this time the violence was carried into the heart of the urban communities through the bombing campaign.

But was this kind of military offensive in the best interests of the people?

What we have to ask ourselves is whether a campaign such as the Provisionals conducted could ever be instrumental in uniting the working class movement and strengthening it, or whether, on the contrary, it divided the working class and alienated potential allies.

What is certain is that it led to a polarisation between Catholic and Protestant workers and provided the British government with an excuse for even more brutal measures of repression. In addition, it made political activity around the vital demands of democratic reform much more difficult and hindered the development of a broad united front against unionism. The Provisionals' campaign of violence further provided an excuse to reaction in Northern Ireland to build up its extreme right wing armed bodies and resort to sectarian violence and cold-blooded assassination of individual Catholics. Progressive opinion in Britain itself was alienated, so making it much more difficult to establish a much-needed solidarity movement with the anti-unionists. In such circumstances the loss of life incurred was both tragic and unnecessary.

That is why the Communist Party of Ireland stated in a resolution of Congress, 1971: **"Such acts must be unequivocally condemned as outrages on the people's cause."**

During the last few months there has been a further split in the ranks of the Republican movement. A group calling itself the Irish Republican Socialist Party has broken away from the Official Republican movement and has formed a rival organisation. The IRSP originally consisted of ultra-lefts who were in opposition to the strategy of the democratic struggle. They have been joined by a number of young Provisionals unable to accept the cease-fire between the British army and the Provisional IRA. The IRSP is now under the military "protection" of what is known as the People's Liberation Army, and there have been attacks on Official Republicans followed by counter attacks. These now appear to have stopped. It is clear that those responsible for this split have done a very grave damage to the Republican movement and to the progressive struggle in Ireland. They have made it easy for reaction to use violence, perhaps even assassination, against those committed to the ideals of socialism and a united Ireland. It is certain that the murder of Republicans by each other can only benefit the enemies of Ireland, and is treachery to the cause of Irish self-determination.

Power Sharing

Instead of pursuing a policy in line with the demands of the civil rights programme and introducing basic democratic rights for all the citizens of Northern Ireland, the British government has tried to produce a settlement based on formal manipulations of the existing power structure, while continuing to impose martial law and internment.

In these circumstances, it is not surprising that when Direct Rule was followed by the so-called Power Sharing Executive, it was unable to make any decisive changes for the better. Indeed, while it failed to satisfy the demands of anti-unionists, engendering among them intense frustration and disillusionment, it also aroused fear and antagonism in the loyalists.

There is no doubt that the bringing down of Stormont was seen as a limited victory by many anti-unionists, but it was not followed by the requisite political changes. Disillusionment was intensified by the behaviour of those anti-unionist politicians who accepted posts in the new administration; their capitulations did much to impede the fight against repression, especially with regard to the ending of internment.

The Ulster Workers' Council Stoppage of Work

The imposition of Direct Rule and then of the Power Sharing Executive put an enormous strain on the traditional monolithic

unity of the loyalists, which had already been undermined by attempts by O'Neill and then Chichester Clark to take Northern Ireland along the road favoured by monopoly capitalism.

As we have already seen above, a number of parties emerged in opposition to what became the Unionist Party of Northern Ireland, led by Faulkner, who backed the Power Sharing Executive. These opposition parties formed themselves into the UUUC and gave support to a number of paramilitary groups such as the Ulster Defence Association (UDA) and the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) who were continuing the old tradition of terrorising the Catholic population by a series of extremely brutal assassinations. This campaign was justified by William Craig, leader of the Vanguard Unionist Party, a former minister in charge of the police force, as "understandable" and "excusable".

Two days after this speech, on May 14, the Ulster Workers' Council made a call for a general stoppage in the event of there being a vote in the Assembly in favour of the Sunningdale Agreement. This agreement had been worked out by representatives of the British and Irish governments, as well as representatives of Faulkner's unionists, the Alliance Party, and the Social-Democratic Labour Party.

The Alliance Party represents middle class voters, particularly middle class Catholic voters, who do not support unionism, but agree with the initiatives taken by O'Neill to dispense with the border. The Social and Democratic Labour Party is a party that represents, at the moment, the mass of anti-unionist Catholic voters. It is a party which is nationalist in some respects, but with a position very close on many issues to the British Labour Party.

The majority of the unionists were particularly incensed by the Sunningdale Agreement, not only because it institutionalised power sharing, but it also formalised what was called an "Irish dimension", ie it recognised that Northern Ireland should have special relations with the South of Ireland and that the Irish as well as the British government should be consulted about any developments of a constitutional nature.

When the extreme right wing unionists, who constituted a minority in the Assembly, were unable to prevent the agreement being ratified, an immediate call was made for a stoppage of work.

This call was ignored by most of the workforce: however, it was answered by certain key sections, notably in the electricity supply industry, where sectarian recruiting policies by the Electricity Board had ensured that the workers were solidly loyalist. They were to play a key role in the stoppage.

In Belfast and other industrial centres the workers were then intimidated on a massive scale by gangs of armed thugs who set up barricades and refused to allow working people to go to work.

 The British army did nothing to challenge this widespread

disorder and violence, in which several people were killed, and only cleared barricades from a few of the main roads, after having first reached agreement with the committee running the stoppage. They only moved in force against anti-unionists who attempted to defy and dismantle barricades surrounding their areas.

This connivance, together with the implicit support given by the media and the employers to this so-called strike, greatly increased the authority of the UWC and the co-ordinating committee. Disaffected loyalists, incensed by the Sunningdale Agreement, began to see the UWC as a viable opposition and the bandwagon of support for it began to roll in the loyalist areas, picking up some from those workers who had, a fortnight earlier, refused to take part in the stoppage. Finally, on May 28, 1974, Faulkner resigned and the executive was dissolved.

It would be a grave mistake to see the UWC stoppage as a "strike" which demonstrated the power of the working people, as some ultra-left commentators have argued. And for the following reasons:

The stoppage was not organised through the labour movement, but right outside of it in a thoroughly anti-democratic fashion. Some have tried to present it as a rank-and-file movement within the labour movement; but there is no evidence for this. Many of those who participated in the co-ordinating committee are known to have been business men and members of the Orange Order.

What a caricature of a "Strike Committee"!

The aim of the stoppage was not in any way to further the interests of working people, but, on the contrary, to defend the traditional "Protestant Ascendancy"—the enemy of a strong and united labour movement. The methods used to enforce the stoppage were designed to smash resistance from organised trade unionists. But hundreds of heroic and dedicated trades unionists defied this threat in the march back to work led by Len Murray, General Secretary of the TUC. This march demonstrated that the stoppage was not an official union strike and was in fact a weapon being used by the forces of reaction to weaken and then destroy any chance for unity of the working people of Northern Ireland.

Mass Opposition to Internment and Repression

In spite of the whole weight of the "war machine" being used against the anti-unionists, they have not allowed their resistance to be broken. After internment was introduced, a massive rent and rates strike was declared and many are still committed to it —four years later.

Unfortunately the SDLP, which had supported NICRA's original call and which had, to a considerable extent, given encouragement and leadership to the strike, withdrew their backing after receiving posts in the executive, even though the demand of the strikers for the ending of internment has still not been met. In capitulating in this opportunist fashion, the SDLP produced a certain amount of demoralisation. Nevertheless, many still hold firm.

It is undoubtedly true that during the last few years the anti-unionist areas have developed a capacity for mass action that is one of their best weapons. The most powerful and moving expression of this was the response to the massacre at Derry on January 30, 1972, when 14 unarmed civilians were gunned down by the army.

A week later a huge demonstration of 50,000 marched at Newry in spirited, heroic, but peaceful defiance of the army.

Unfortunately, the mass resistance to internment is still only expressed in the anti-unionist areas, although there are sections of the loyalists that are bitterly opposed to it. However, there have been some encouraging signs recently of the involvement of sections of the loyalist working class in the community associations which have grown up in different parts of Northern Ireland and which have been fighting on such issues as rent increases, urban development and other non-sectarian questions that can unite working people. It is extremely important that this type of political development is encouraged, for it provides the means of building up a broad alliance on class issues which would challenge the entrenched interests of both unionism and British imperialism.

At the moment, the obstacles placed in the path of such activity by the forces of reaction, both British and Irish, are enormous. But the spirit of revolt against tyranny, and the will to go forward in spite of all difficulties, is unquenched in many of the working people of the six counties.

It can, and will, lead them to a democratic transformation of their society where they will be able to determine their own future free of all that presently impedes them.

The British Labour Movement and Northern Ireland

For over 50 years the Communist Party of Great Britain has attacked the role of British imperialism in Ireland, and has defended the right of the Irish people to self-determination. In 1922, Shapurji Saklatvala, a Communist, was the only MP to denounce partition. He argued that the settlement was "based on coercion and signed under duress".

A year before, William Paul had outlined the Communist Party's position in a pamphlet called *The Irish Crisis*: "We Communists of the British Party have a sacred duty to perform in connection with the Irish question . . . we believe in a Republic for Ireland because that is what the majority of Irish workers want. We believe in helping Ireland because she is the victim of capitalist imperialism."

And, it might be added, this imperialism has been, and still is, largely based in Britain. The enemy of the British working people, namely, British capitalism, is also the main enemy of the Irish people.

It is not an accident that the Tory Party is known as the Conservative and **Unionist** Party. That reflects the collaboration between big business in Britain and the ruling class in Northern Ireland. If unionism is routed, that would be a major development towards socialism in this country, as well as a decisive blow for Irish self-determination and working class unity in the whole of Ireland.

Anything that weakens the big monopolies that exploit the people of Ireland would help the working class of Britain and its allies to challenge then defeat them in this country. Also, conversely, every advance made by the British people can only benefit the people of Ireland in their age-long battle.

As long as British imperialism is oppressing the Irish, or any other people for that matter, we cannot achieve socialism in Britain. As Karl Marx put it—speaking, incidentally, of British oppression in Ireland—"a people that oppresses another forges its own chains".

For the British and Irish working class, the question is not simply one of international solidarity. Our own immediate self-interests dictate that we establish a basis for common action—for we share a common enemy. Therefore the British labour movement should use all its massive strength to force the British government to change its disastrous policy in Northern Ireland.

As Gordon McLennan, General Secretary of the Communist Party of Great Britain, wrote in *Britain and the Irish Crisis*: "The key question remains unity in action of the British and Irish labour and progressive movement . . . and for new governments in Britain and Ireland that will be forced to legislate by the power of the mass movement in the interests of working people."

That new policy which should be adopted has **three major aspects, all of which are related to one another so that, taken together, they form an integrated whole.** They are as follows:

- An end to repression
- The introduction and implementation of democratic rights and social and economic reforms
- The withdrawal of the British armed forces.

It is this comprehensive policy that must be fought for—half-measures are not enough.

First of all, there should be an **immediate end to internment,** followed by the repeal of the Emergency Provisions Act and the lifting of what amounts to martial law.

Many sections of public opinion in Northern Ireland are opposed to the continuation of internment. These include substantial numbers of loyalists, as well as the Alliance Party, the SDLP, the Communist Party, the Northern Ireland Committee of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions and the Republican movement. Moreover, these organisations believe that internment should be brought to an end immediately and that the present policy of "trickle release" is cowardly and of very little value.

As a recent delegation organised by the National Council for Civil Liberties argued in its report, based on discussions with a wide spectrum of opinion, "the ending of detention is an essential prerequisite for any political progress" and that "the present policy of the Secretary of State in respect of the ending of detention is counter-productive" (ie the operation of "trickle release"), and the report goes on to state, "the uncertainty of detention is compounded by the present 'trickle release' approach and we strongly feel that the resulting impact on the detainees is nothing short of inhuman".

Substantial compensation should be paid to released internees to help them overcome the overwhelming debts that they have accumulated and to recompense them in some measure for their loss of liberty and the resulting suffering caused to them and their families. They should also be credited with a first-class insurance stamp for the time they were interned, so that they are not deprived of benefits and allowances. Substantial aid should be given to the various agencies that help released internees to overcome their many difficulties.

The judicial farce of the Diplock Courts must be ended as soon as possible and there should be an immediate review of sentence for all political prisoners, pending the granting of an amnesty.

Democratic Reforms

As we have argued above, the struggle for democratic rights is an essential part of the progress of the Irish people towards self-determination. Nor is it a problem for the Irish people alone, although they face peculiar difficulties. In many different parts of the world, the struggle for national self-determination is closely and inseparably linked with the fight for democracy. As world capitalism sinks deeper into crisis, so it resorts to authoritarian, repressive measures. The situation in Northern Ireland is fundamentally unstable from the capitalist point of view; the whole impetus of history is behind the struggle for Irish self-determination. Unable to control a sizeable minority

of the people through ideological manipulation, British imperialism and the local ruling class have resorted to oppression and the denial of civil and democratic rights.

The British government must be forced by the British labour movement to implement the demands of the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (NICRA).

What are these demands?

Bill of Rights

NICRA has proposed that the Bill of Rights, for which they are campaigning, should be based on the following four principles:

- Guarantee the freedom for political thought and activity for all citizens in Northern Ireland
- Guarantee the end of repressive laws, which breach common law, and contravene international human rights legislation
- Guarantee the outlawing of discrimination against any citizen for reason of belief, religion, politics, sex, race or colour
- Guarantee the establishment of law-enforcement agencies acceptable to the overwhelming majority of the citizens.

Among the provisions of the Bill they suggest the following should be included:

- The immediate ending of internment as part of the ending of all repressive legislation
- That the proposed Assembly of Northern Ireland should have no powers to reintroduce such repressive legislation
- The outlawing of discrimination on religious grounds. The addition of religious belief to race as a possible cause of discrimination to be made to the Race Relations Act
- That it shall not be an offence to declare oneself a Republican, nor to work for the propagation of such views, nor to display the tricolour
- That there should be strict provisions against gerrymandering in elections and that a system of proportional representation should be employed (these provisions are already partly implemented)
- That the people of Northern Ireland, through their elected representatives, should have the power to initiate constitutional changes which would lead to a reunification of Ireland.

The proposal to introduce a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland had already received support from the British and Irish TUCs. However, much more needs to be done to see that the British government implements such a policy.

Social and Economic Reforms

The Northern Ireland Committee of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions in an important policy statement in April 1975 (and quoted in the section above on the price of disunity) has pointed out that it is "indisputable that in Northern Ireland poverty and deprivation know no religious boundaries, only those of class". They go on to say that division in the working class movement in Northern Ireland has resulted in a much lower standard of living for all Northern Ireland workers than that of the British worker: the capital expenditure by the British government in Northern Ireland has been less per capita over the last decade than that given to Scotland and even though much of it is in the form of financial support to the security forces (and that kind of assistance benefits the people of Northern Ireland not at all).

Much government assistance is required to give aid to the development of local industry. Only 22 per cent of Northern industry is indigenous. If this proportion were increased it would help to diversify types of industry and offer more stable employment prospects. There has been a catastrophic decline in manufacturing industries in the last 25 years; since 1950 there has been a decline from 63 per cent to 50 per cent of that section of industry. It is imperative that there should be massive state investment in Northern Ireland industry; equality of work opportunity is extremely difficult to fight for in a situation of grave and continuous unemployment.

In order to deal with the appalling housing problems, major support needs to be given to a building programme and to the work of the housing executive. Central control of land development is necessary in order to prevent speculation and utilise all resources, especially of urban land.

British Troops in Northern Ireland

The Communist Party has always been opposed to the presence of British troops in Northern Ireland, because we recognise that they are used as an instrument of imperialist policies. Over 21 years ago, the first edition of the party's programme *The British Road to Socialism* stated unequivocally: "The enforced partition of Ireland should be ended and British troops withdrawn from Northern Ireland, leaving the Irish people free to realise their united republic."

The British army has been in Ireland ever since she became England's first colony. After partition, troops remained in the six counties to give military backing to the Stormont régime and

to retain a British presence in Ireland. In 1969, when they were reinforced during the pogroms against the anti-unionist areas, we argued that what was needed was the rapid implementation of democratic reforms; the presence of troops would, by themselves, solve none of Northern Ireland's problems. What was needed then, and what is needed now, is a completely new policy.

Instead, the army has been used increasingly as a major instrument of repression to introduce internment and the massive civilian intimidations and harassment that accompanied it. "Counter insurgency techniques" have been developed. British troops have learnt how to control demonstrations by use of toxic gas, and how to intimidate whole areas by punitive arms searches, mass detention and interrogation. It has used "depth interrogation"—a euphemism for sophisticated torture techniques—against detainees. It is common knowledge that the army turns a blind eye to many of the illegal activities of the loyalists and it is alleged that the special unit SAS has been implicated in sectarian assassinations. It is clear that in no way can the army be described as a peace-keeping force; indeed, there are some reactionary army strategists who see Northern Ireland as a training ground for work they will do in Britain itself.

In view of all this, there are some who do not understand why we do not demand "Troops Out Now!" After all, the British Communist Party has always demanded the withdrawal of troops from the colonies.

But the situation in Northern Ireland is unique in many respects. In other countries the demand for the withdrawal of troops was the expression of a developed campaign for national liberation, but Northern Ireland is not even a country; it is a truncated statelet created to ensure a permanent loyalist administration based upon majority support. The progressive forces are weak and work under enormous disadvantages. Sectarianism has divided the working class, while the anti-unionists receive very little support from the people of the South who are bemused by the two-faced policies of their own governments and alienated by the Provisionals' bombing campaign. On the other hand, the loyalists have access to most of the 300,000 guns in the six counties and have now formed the Ulster Army Council from the various paramilitary groups. The forces of reaction still control the state apparatus, such as the police and the civil service.

For all these reasons, British troops can only be withdrawn as part of an overall political solution; **half-measures are not enough —what is needed is a comprehensive policy.**

We have to make sure that when the troops are withdrawn they leave **for good** and have no opportunity to return. Also, the withdrawal of troops would achieve very little if military power passed into the hands of the loyalist paramilitary organisations, who would pursue, possibly with even greater venom, the repressive policies of the army. There are some who suggest that this implies what they call a "blood bath" theory, ie that the British

army remains to prevent a bloody war between the Protestants and the Catholics. But that is not our position; the British army is **not** a neutral peace-keeping force. But neither should we underestimate the military strength of the loyalists. Power must not be handed over to them; in such an event a violent pogrom against the anti-unionist areas is more than likely. But that is not the most important factor. What is of paramount importance is that military power does not pass into the hands of the loyalist paramilitary organisations. This would be a virtual return to a Stormont administration.

However, if the troops are taken off the streets and withdrawn to barracks, pending their ultimate withdrawal, there will need to be a radical restructuring of the local forces. Both NICRA and Official Sinn Fein have made proposals for a non-sectarian police force. Such a force would need to operate according to the provisions of the Bill of Rights and be under an independent and democratically controlled police authority.

The supporters of the "Troops Out Now!" slogan are, in the main, contemptuous of the demand for democratic, social and economic reforms; they see that as "reformist tinkering". Instead, they demand the withdrawal of troops so that the "war of national liberation" may commence. But in the present situation in the North and South of Ireland, such a programme is sheer folly and, moreover, is not supported by **any** important sections of the anti-unionists, including the Provisionals.

On the contrary, our task is to give maximum solidarity to the progressive forces in Northern Ireland by forcing the British government to implement the necessary reforms. If such a programme is carried through, that will enable us to get British troops out of Ireland, once and for all, and will leave the way clear for the Irish people to achieve unity and national self-determination.

Prevention of Terrorism Act

The disease of repression is not a phenomenon peculiar to Northern Ireland and it is not the only part of the so-called United Kingdom to suffer from attacks upon democracy. Wherever capitalism feels that it is coming under intolerable pressure it will defend itself, if it is allowed to do so, by adopting similar measures.

As the class struggle has sharpened in the last period in Britain, we have seen increasing attempts to undermine civil and democratic liberties: the Industrial Relations Act, the Immigration Acts, the changes in the conspiracy laws, and so on.

The sectarian and divisive bombing outrages in Birmingham in December 1974 gave the Home Secretary, Roy Jenkins, an opportunity to get passed through Parliament an Act which is a grave threat to democracy in this country.

It was rushed through the House of Commons with obscene haste while the memory of the bombing was still vivid in the minds of MPs. The fact that the Home Office was able to present the Bill so quickly gives a clear indication that it had been prepared earlier and brought out at an opportune time.

This Act is supposedly directed against violent terrorism, but it is so loosely worded that it could, in fact, be used against other types of political protest. The vagueness of definition is not accidental, but indicates a piece of legislation which could be used later to repress political activities.

We must not forget that the Home Secretary, who forced this through a panic-stricken Commons, is the same man who has refused, with bitter obduracy, to release the Shrewsbury pickets, slandering them by asserting that they used violence in pursuit of political objectives. He has also been very closely associated with the rise of Sir Robert Mark, whose reactionary views on the role of the police are well known.

This Act could be used against any and every section of the British labour movement. At the moment, significantly enough, it has been used, time and time again, against Irishmen who have been actively involved in their trade unions and in left wing politics.

Connolly wrote just 60 years ago in an article entitled *Our Disappearing Liberties*: "If fresh chains are forged for the workers it shall not be said that we by our silence allowed those who trusted us to remain ignorant of the fact that the chains were in preparation."

Much closer links need to be established between the British and Irish labour movements. The delegations from the Tyne and Wear Trades Council and the Greater London Association of Trades Councils have played an important role in awakening the trade union movement on this question. Also, the recent delegation from the London District of the Communist Party is an example which should be followed by other labour movement organisations.

The fates of the British and the Irish labour movements are intimately connected, for the struggle to force the British government to implement progressive policies in Northern Ireland is one which benefits not only the Irish people but also their British counterparts. It will be a hard and difficult fight—let no one doubt that—for the battle is against British imperialism at its very heart, and every defeat, every victory, will immediately affect the British people. It is not a struggle that we can afford to neglect—rather it is one to which we are called by a most solemn duty.

Published by the Communist Party, 16 King Street, London, WC2E 8HY, and printed by Farleigh Press Ltd. (T.U.), Watford, Herts—CP/D/88/10/75—26143

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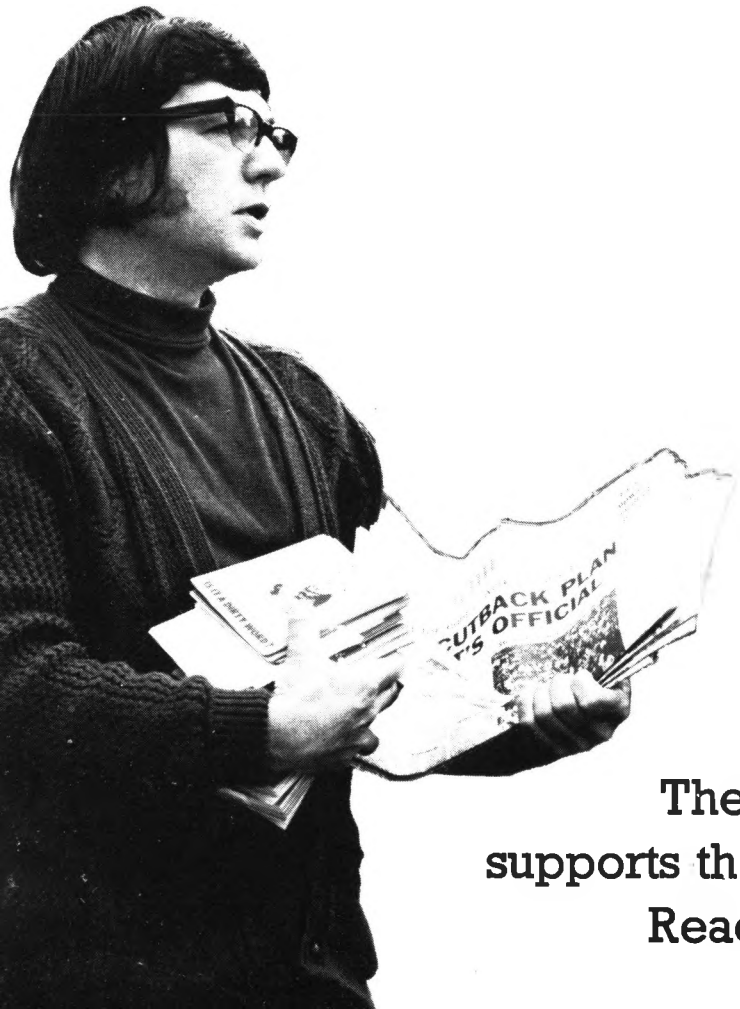

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RECONSECRATING THE DAILY WORKER

SATURDAY OCTOBER 4 1975

AN OPEN LETTER to Michael Foot: p. 2

Labour conference demands action

CUT ARMS CASH, WILSON TOLD

By ROGER BAGLEY

END the double talk and make a real cut in arms spending, Premier Wilson was forcibly told by the Labour Party conference yesterday.

Executive member Ian Mikardo, MP, was applauded when he protested that the government had previously "conned" the Labour Party into believing that real cuts were to be made in arms spending.

"I must say bluntly now that in the speech I made last year on this subject I conned conference, and I conned conference because I was conned myself. We were all conned," he said.

The figures showed that even after the government's recent cutback in arms spending, in real terms, Britain's defence spending would be higher than it was in 1974 in every year from now right up to 1984.

"And by that time, ten years from now, our main European NATO allies will be spending about 3 per cent of their gross national product, on average, on defence, and we shall still be spending 4½ per cent.

Mr. Mikardo asked how it could be compatible with Socialist policy to cut back spending on housing, education and social services when at the same time arms spending was being increased.

Delegates came to the rostrum to condemn the waste of millions of pounds on implements of death, and demanded that the money should be used instead to modernise industry and to provide a better life for the people.

Manifesto

Britain would be devastated in any nuclear war, they pointed out.

With the backing of the executive, conference passed overwhelmingly a resolution regretting that cuts had been made in spending on the social services and education while defence expenditure continued to rise.

The resolution viewed with concern the failure of the government to fulfill the commitment outlined in the party's 1974 manifesto and called upon the government to implement an immediate reduction in arms spending, with the long-term objective of cutting defence expenditure in real terms.

But another resolution calling for withdrawal from NATO and the adoption of a non-aligned defence policy was rejected on the advice of the executive.

U S bases

Urging rejection of the resolution, Mr. Mikardo said it was not Labour Party policy to leave NATO. The policy also stated in the manifesto was for the mutual and concurrent phasing out of both NATO and the Warsaw Pact.

Mr. Stan Newens, MP for Harlow, urged conference to pass both resolutions.

"In 1973 the Labour Party conference passed a resolution for cuts of £1,000 million in arms expenditure, the closing down of all US bases on British soil or British waters," he said.

In the event, the manifesto watered this pledge down to a commitment to reduce the burden of expenditure in line with

★ continued on p. 3

STAN NEWENS, MP — IAN MIKARDO, MP

'BLOCK PETROL PRICE RISES'

The Scottish Motor Trade Association, is urging the government to block any move by petrol companies to raise the wholesale price after the recent 10 per cent increase in the cost of crude oil.

The association, which represents more than 1,700 garages in Scotland, feels that, with the petrol companies deeply involved in price cutting, it would be foolish for the price commission to consider moves for an increase.

Lending rate rise threat to loans

A sharp rise in the Bank of England minimum lending rate allowed the increase in share prices yesterday and signalled that a further rise in overdraft charges is likely soon. Mortgage rates may be forced up too.

The minimum lending rate jumped from 11 per cent to 12 per cent, its highest since May last year.

CONCORDE will enter commercial service simultaneously with British Airways and Air France on January 21.

Judge acquits black student, urges inquiry

By HELEN HEWLAND

A JUDGE at the Middlesex Crown Court in London yesterday quashed convictions against a black school student who had been found guilty of assaulting a police officer and using insulting behaviour.

Judge Thomas Edie said that the case reflected on the conduct of the police and he suggested that an investigation should be carried out by the appropriate authority.

The decision was greeted by a packed public gallery as a victory for Hornsey student Cliff McDaniel, fellow students at the Stationers Company school and their parents.

They canvassed against his treatment by police outside the school during lunchtime on April 17 this year and his subsequent conviction by Highgate magistrates on the two charges.

After a two-day hearing Judge Edie said that the prosecution had failed to prove Mr. McDaniel guilty on the first charge of insulting behaviour likely to cause a breach of the peace and as this was central to the case, the appeal against the second charge had to be allowed as well.

The police had alleged that Mr. McDaniel had made a masturbatory gesture toward a police patrol car which shocked passers-by. When officers tried to arrest him he struggled and hit Pc Ryan David, the police claimed.

In his summing up defence counsel Ian Macdonald said that Mr. McDaniel was the one who was on the receiving end and not the one giving out the punches.

Complained

He said that the prosecution case was "riddled with contradictions" and that two police officers, PC Ryan David and PC Fry, had been involved in a shoddy plan to make a false arrest in which a third officer PC McCulloch had refused to get involved.

The two officers had clearly abused their powers, he said.

Mr. Robert Burgess, headmaster at the school, told the court that he went to see Mr. McDaniel at the police station after the incident and after Mr. McDaniel complained of injuries he asked a welfare assistant, Mrs. Jane Lansridge, to make a report on him.

Earlier, Mrs. Langridge had said that she was stunned by the behaviour of the police she described how she saw Mr. McDaniel being hit in the back by a police officer "as he was encircled by police. Two fists went in and he grunted out loud," she said.

Pavement

In her examination, she noticed he had a graze on his chest, weals on his arms and bruises on his back, and he complained of pains in his stomach, she said.

Giving evidence earlier, Mrs. Maynard said she had seen police men grab Mr. McDaniel by his feet and hold him upside down.

"At one time he was so close down, his face was more or less on the pavement," said Mrs. Maynard.

She said that she and a colleague urged the police to mind his head and the neck, but they were told in an aggressive fashion to mind their own business.

Chile boss props up Franco

GEN. PINOCHET, the boss of Chile's bloodstained military junta, has sent a message to Spain's dictator, Gen. Franco, expressing his support for the Spanish fascist ruler.

Gen. Pinochet was awarded the Spanish Grand Cross of Military Merit by Gen. Franco on the same day—Friday last week—that he refused to reprieve five young anti-fascists sentenced to death.

Franco ordered his chief of staff to personally present the medal, described as the highest award of the Spanish regime, to Pinochet.

Yesterday, Pinochet sent a reply attacking the "infamous international campaign" against Franco. "I am sure," Pinochet added, "that from this difficult trial will arise a stronger, united Spain, respected for the strength of its conviction."

TRANSPORT BOYCOTT

A communique from the Franco cabinet yesterday declared that it would use all the means at its disposal to crack down on "terrorism" in the country.

The harsh warning of yet more repression from the cabinet came as the international 48-hour boycott of transport with Spain continued in protest at the execution of the five anti-fascists last week.

The German Democratic Republic yesterday took off diplomatic relations with Spain.

The East German Trades Union Confederation has asked its 36

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EXCELLENT START

NO RETREAT from the Socialist policies upon which the government was elected" was the call from the Labour Party conference.

To hold the government to its manifesto commitments is a vital operation now, and the Star is playing its part in demanding this.

To wage an effective "holding" operation the progress moves are needed.

The campaigning support of the Star is needed, deepening our financial difficulties, the Fund target has been like a holding operation. We've not reached our target overnight.

We've been given an excellent start this month with a very generous gift from an old friend in Surrey who has sent £500 — our very warmest thanks. In yesterday's mail of £622.65 also came £10.40 from Milton Dundas Times readers, a guarantee plus extra collected through extra Star sales in TUC week; £1.50 from Irvine & District Labour Council and Trades Council Derby, friends. Will you now add your body to the Star Fund for a success month? We begin with

£835

ZELDA CURTIS

Printers fined over Sharman picketing

Twenty-four National Graphical Association members were ordered to pay fines and costs totalling £244 when they appeared before Peterborough magistrates yesterday on charges arising from an industrial dispute.

The men, who were on picket duty outside the Sharman Newspaper printing plant on the outskirts of the city in July, admitted obstructing the police. Four of them also admitted criminal damage.

'We did it' boast UVF gunmen

By CHRIS MYANT

UNIONISM'S most bloodthirsty terror gang yesterday claimed responsibility for Thursday's wave of murder attacks in Northern Ireland.

Ulster Volunteer Force leaders cynically declared that the day's series of bomb and gun attacks showed they were "fully prepared and willing to pursue such counter-terrorist policies as may from time to time be considered necessary."

The brazen claim of responsibility for a series of attacks which cost the lives of ten people—four of them UVF members blown up by their own bomb—was seen yesterday as a direct challenge to the British direct rule team.

In all, on Thursday and yesterday 12 were killed and over 50 injured, some of them seriously.

Ten died in what were clearly UVF attacks, another victim was an associate of the UVF, killed by another Unionist group, and the 12th was a Protestant found shot through the head within yards of the Belfast City Hall.

Death threats

The violence continued yesterday with a bomb attack on the headquarters of Red Hand Commandos' boss and convicted bank robber, John Mckeague, one of the longest standing figures on the Unionist extreme right wing.

The offices of his weekly paper Loyalist News and the shop below were badly damaged. Mr. McKeague's sister was seriously injured and a man was shot during the attack.

Over the past four years, the Loyalist News has specialised in printing death threats directed toward specific Catholics, or all Protestants who have defied sectarianism and maintained their relations with Catholics.

After having been closely allied to the UVF for several years, Mr. McKeague's RHC has now joined the Ulster Defence Association in its frequently bloody quarrel with the UVF.

'UVF connections'

Unlike the day after the Provisional IRA bombing blitz of a fortnight ago, the British army response to the latest round of Unionist slaughter has been muted in the extreme.

Two weeks ago, anti-Unionist areas were saturated with troops. "Hundreds of people were "screened" and dozens arrested. Yesterday, the direct rule team at Stormont Castle announced that eight people had been arrested, sources adding that some had "UVF connections."

Mr. Merlyn Rees, direct rule chief and responsible for the army and RUC policy in the North, was reported as saying that the "security forces" would remain at a "very high level of alert."

The UVF leaders went far beyond merely claiming responsibility for the murder of some Catholics. They also made a direct call for mutiny on the part of British army soldiers and RUC members.

"All Loyalist members of the security forces," they said, should "implement a policy of non-co-operation with those of their colleagues and superiors who are fully committed to the present security policies of the government.

'Provocation'

"The time has now come for full co-operation between all defenders of Ulster, whether they be official or unofficial."

Mr. Glenn Barr, a leader of the UDA and chairman of the Ulster Loyalist Central Co-ordinating Committee, yesterday claimed the UVF for the methods it used and added that there had been "extreme provocation."

He said the UVF should come back into the ULCCC—it left earlier this year—"if you can get your plans a lot better" when there is co-ordination.

Anti-Unionists were yesterday demanding immediate action from the direct rule team—pointing out that, since the New Year, the UVF had been openly advertising for "combatant volunteers." Its preparations could hardly have been secret, they said.

In DUBLIN, the coalition government refused to negotiate with a gang that kidnapped Dutch businessman Mr. Tiede Herrema early yesterday. The gang said it would kill Mr. Herrema if Dr. Rose Dugdale and other Republican prisoners were not freed. The Provisional IRA denied it was involved.

On Monday

THE ARMY

The first of a series by ROD CAIRD on how the army has changed over 30 years.

Ban on Square —but meeting will be held

A LAST attempt was made in the High Court yesterday to have set aside the ban on meetings in Trafalgar Square referring to Ireland.

An injunction was sought before Mr. Justice Stocker, by Mr. Colin Sweet, actins for the British Peace Committee. The injunction was not successful, and failed, apparently on grounds of technicality.

But the meeting and march tomorrow will go ahead as planned. A march will leave Speakers' Corner at 2.30 p.m. and, by way of Trafalgar Square, will finish with a meeting at Whole Gardens.

TERRORISM ACT

The BPC yesterday made a new application to the Department of the Environment, saying the purpose of the meeting was to discuss restrictions on free speech relating to government policy on Ireland and, in particular, to oppose the Prevention of Terrorism Act and the introduction of further permanent emergency powers legislation in Parliament when it reassembles.

The Department refused the application, not on grounds that it contravened the ban imposed three years ago, but because there was inadequate time to consider the application.

The BPC's lawyers then filed an injunction naming the Secretary of State for the Environment, Mr. Crosland, as the defendant. A writ will be issued on Monday morning seeking a declaration of the court that the Secretary of State would not be able "to prohibit the lawful use of Trafalgar Square."

Observer editor Astor to retire

Mr. David Astor said last night that he is retiring as editor of the Observer after 27 years in the chair. He was meeting the staff last night to tell them of his decision.

He is to join the paper's editorial trust, which will appoint a new editor, and he will probably hand over early next year. Mr. Astor, heir presumptive to the fourth Viscount Astor of Hever, is 63.

Leyland prices up

British Leyland car prices rise by an average 3.7 per cent next week. Those of German BMWs have already risen by 4 per cent.

Act against disaster

THE extreme right-wing gunmen organised in the Ulster Volunteer Force have deliberately challenged the government.

They have done so by publicly flaunting responsibility yesterday for most of the sectarian killings of the previous 24 hours in Northern Ireland, in which 10 people died.

The UVF, which was legalised 18 months ago by the Labour government, has been openly recruiting gunmen, advertising for them with impunity.

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Its statement yesterday rubbed the nose of Secretary of State for Northern Ireland Merlyn Rees in the very bloodshed the ultras have let loose.

This has underlined the grave warning by the delegation of the London Communist Party to Northern Ireland of the danger of a "harsh into disaster" unless the government acts swiftly.

Changes are urgently needed in government policy to end the repressive rule which sustains sectarianism and discrimination, and gives rise to the present evils.

The government should be pressed to release all internees and adopt and implement a Bill of Rights introducing democratic reforms.

It should repeal repressive laws, withdraw troops to barracks pending complete withdrawal, and replace the Royal Ulster Constabulary by a non-sectarian police force acceptable to the people and under democratic control.

It should lift the ban on meetings on the Irish question in Trafalgar Square, on which a demonstration has been called this weekend by the British Peace Committee.

We say

Cut this huge waste

THE DEMAND which the delegates at the Labour Party conference meeting yesterday for big cuts in arms spending repeats the call the party's conference have made before but which the Wilson government has ignored.

Mr. Mikardo, who moved the successful resolution on arms cuts, said the Labour delegates had been conned previously into believing the cuts desired would be made.

★

To ensure that this time the demand will, in fact, be met will require a sustained and massive campaign in the country and in Parliament.

This is one of the most crucial issues. When Mr. Healey spoke during the week of requiring to increase taxes on the people if public spending was not to be cut, he conveniently forgot to mention the massive waste of well over £4,000 million on arms, and the fact that this bill is increasing.

★

The Tories, too, keep quiet about the huge sums being poured down the drain by the government on arms when they campaign for even bigger cuts in social services.

The labour movement should go to town on this issue with a campaign that will put the right-wingers and the Tories on the spot by showing that by making a 50 per cent cut in the arms bill, massive sums and resources would be freed for social, peaceful needs.